



## Kinetic study of the 4-Nitrophenol photooxidation and photoreduction reactions using CdS

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### ABSTRACT

We have investigated the kinetics of the photooxidation or photoreduction of 4-Nitrophenol (4-NP) with CdS as photocatalyst, and UV or visible light irradiation in the presence of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub>. The photocatalytic reaction was performed by varying the Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentration under aerobic or anaerobic conditions, photocatalyst load and 4-Nitrophenol concentration. The 4-NP oxidation was attributed to the formation of the hydroxyl radical at 4 mM Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentration in either aerobic or anaerobic conditions under UV light irradiation. The 4-NPhenolate reduction was related to the sulfite radicals formed with appropriate Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentration (8 mM) in anaerobic conditions under UV or visible light. The 4-NP oxidation and reduction reactions follow a zero order kinetic and can be used as a model reaction to evaluate the active photocatalyst under UV or visible light.

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## 1. Introduction

The nitroaromatic compounds are among the most common contaminants present in industrial and agricultural wastewaters that provoke important damages to the environment. Several processes have been proposed for their removal such as adsorption, electro-Fenton, photocatalytic degradation and so on [1–4]. Among the nitroaromatic compounds, the 4-Nitrophenol (4-NP) is probably the most frequent pollutant; 4-NP possesses good chemical and biological stability against natural degradation processes. Several works had studied the photocatalytic degradation of 4-NP in aqueous solution using TiO<sub>2</sub> or ZnO oxides semiconductors as photocatalysts [5–9]. In contrast, the 4-NP can be eliminated by catalytic reduction by metallic nanoparticles (Au or Ag) deposited on different supports such as chitosan-coated Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub>, SBA-15, Halloysite nanotubes or ZnO [10–14], in the presence of the sodium borohydride (NaBH<sub>4</sub>), forming 4-aminophenol (4-AP), which is considered as an important intermediate in the pharmaceutical industries for the manufacture of analgesic and antipyretic drugs, such as paracetamol, phenacetin, acetanilide and so on [15]. In addition, the 4-NP reduction by photocatalytic processes has been achieved with resin-supported dye under visible light [16] and alternatively, our group have reported the photocatalytic reduction

of 4-NPhenolate with CdS in the presence of sodium sulfite (Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub>) under visible light [17].

From these results, it is clear that the photooxidation or photoreduction of 4-NP can be carried out by the use of adequate semiconductors and appropriate concentrations of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub>. In this way in the present work we report the kinetic study of the degradation of 4-NP or reduction of 4-NPhenolate as a function of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentration. In these photocatalytic reactions, the influence of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> content in either aerobic or anaerobic conditions, as well as the CdS load and 4-NP concentration was investigated using either UV or visible light irradiation. The structural and optical properties of CdS photocatalyst were characterized by XRD and DRS-UV-vis spectroscopies.

## 2. Experimental

### 2.1. Synthesis of CdS photocatalyst

The CdS photocatalyst was synthesized by the precipitation method in an ethylenediamine–water solution at moderate temperature. In a typical procedure, appropriate amounts of Cd(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>H<sub>2</sub>O (Reasol) and thiourea (stoichiometry molar ratio 1:2), were dissolved in ethylenediamine–water solutions with 10 vol.% of H<sub>2</sub>O at room temperature. The solution was then heated at 110 °C under vigorous magnetic stirring during 24 h. The solid formed was recovered by filtration, washed several times with distilled water and ethanol, and dried at 120 °C for 5 h.

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## 2.2. Characterization of CdS photocatalyst

The CdS photocatalyst was characterized by X-ray powder diffraction using an X-ray diffractometer Siemens D500 with Cu K $\alpha$  radiation (50 kV, 40 mA). The scanning rate was 0.03°/S in the 2 $\theta$  range from 5° to 70°. The band-gap energy was calculated using the Kubelka-Munk method from the diffuse reflectance spectra obtained with a Varian Cary-100 spectrometer equipped with an integration sphere.

## 2.3. Photocatalytic 4-NP degradation or reduction reaction

The photocatalytic reaction was carried out in a glass homemade reactor system containing 200 ml of an aqueous solution with 10–20 ppm of 4-NP (Aldrich). The amount of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> (Reasol) was varied from 10 to 400 mg (0.4 to 16 mM) and the mass of the photocatalysts powder ranged from 5 to 50 mg (0.025–0.25 mg/L). The suspension was maintained by magnetic stirring (600 rpm) at room temperature and was left under dark conditions for 30 min. to ensure the adsorption–desorption equilibrium. Subsequently, the mixture was irradiated with either UV light produced by a high pressure Hg Lamp ( $\lambda = 254$  nm,  $I_0 = 2.2$  mW/cm<sup>2</sup>), encapsulate into a quartz tube immersed into the solution, or visible light supplied by an LED Lamp (3W) emitting  $\lambda = 450$  nm of low luminous fluxes (190 Lumens), located at ~7 cm from the suspension. During the adsorption and photocatalytic reaction process, the suspensions were maintained in either aerobic or anaerobic conditions by bubbling air (O<sub>2</sub> atmosphere) or N<sub>2</sub> gas (N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere), respectively. Similar anaerobic conditions were reached in the absence of bubbled air (without O<sub>2</sub> atmosphere). In all cases, the amount of dissolved oxygen into the suspension was measurement by using Hanna Oxy-Check apparatus to ensure high or low O<sub>2</sub> concentrations. After that the photocatalytic reaction of 4-NP was carried out with different Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentrations. The addition of BaCl<sub>2</sub> into the final irradiated suspension was used to confirm the presence of either sulfite (SO<sub>3</sub><sup>2-</sup>) or sulfate ions (SO<sub>4</sub><sup>2-</sup>) by the precipitation of either BaSO<sub>3</sub> or BaSO<sub>4</sub> in acidic (adjusted with HCl) or alkaline media, respectively.

The estimation of the concentration of photoreduced 4-NP was made by UV-vis spectroscopy using a Varian-Cary 100 spectrometer, by following the disappearance of the absorption band at either 345 nm in acid media or 400 nm in alkaline media. The kinetic data such as the apparent rate constant ( $K_{app}$ ) in both degradation and reduction reactions were obtained considering a pseudo zero order. The Langmuir–Hinshelwood kinetic model is usually applicable to describe the kinetics of 4-NP degradation or reduction on photocatalyst like CdS [12,17]. The disappearance rate ( $r$ ) and the reactant concentration ( $C$ ) are related to time ( $t$ ):

$$r = -\frac{dC}{dt} = \frac{k_r k_{ads} C}{1 + k_{ads} C}$$

where  $k_r$  is the rate constant and  $K_{ads}$  is the adsorption equilibrium constant.

The plot of ( $C/C_0$ ) versus reaction time ( $t$ ) yields a straight line, where the slope is the pseudo zero order apparent rate constant.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Characterization of CdS

#### 3.1.1. X-ray diffraction

Fig. 1 shows the X-ray diffraction patterns for the CdS photocatalyst. The reflection peaks corresponding to the (100), (002) and (101) planes were indexed to the hexagonal phase with lattice parameter close to values previously reported (JCPDS No. 41-1049) for CdS [18]. The relatively strong intensity of the (002) reflection

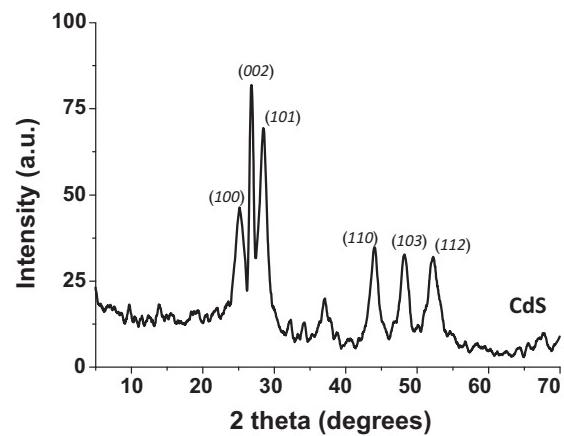


Fig. 1. X-ray diffraction patterns for the CdS photocatalyst.

peak for CdS is indicative of the preferential growth along the c-axis of the hexagonal CdS structure. The average crystallite size for the photocatalyst, determined by the Debye–Scherrer equation from the (002) and (100) reflection peaks, was 16 nm.

#### 3.1.2. UV-vis spectroscopy

Fig. 2 shows the UV-vis diffuse reflectance spectra for the CdS photocatalyst. The photocatalyst exhibits an absorption edge in the visible light region close to 490–520 nm attributed to the intrinsic band-gap transition of an electron from the valence to the conduction band [19,20]. The band-gap energy value of 2.46 eV was estimated by the Kubelka–Munk (K–M) method, extrapolating the linear portion of the ( $FR \times h\nu$ )<sup>2</sup> vs  $h\nu$  curves to  $FR=0$  (inserted in Fig. 2). These results would suggest that CdS can be activated with either UV or blue light irradiation. In this case, the shaded area in the Fig. 2 correspond to the emission spectrum of the blue LED lamp used for their activation.

### 3.2. Oxygen consumption by sulfite ions

Fig. 3A shows the oxygen concentration in the suspension as a function of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentration under dark conditions (adsorption–desorption equilibrium) and in the absence of bubbled air (without O<sub>2</sub> atmosphere). Initially, the O<sub>2</sub> concentration was high (90%), but it decreased as the Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentration increased, thus suggesting that the O<sub>2</sub> was consumed by the oxidation of SO<sub>3</sub><sup>2-</sup> ions [21]. Conversely, rapid O<sub>2</sub> consumption was detected during the first 5 min. of irradiation (photocatalytic reaction

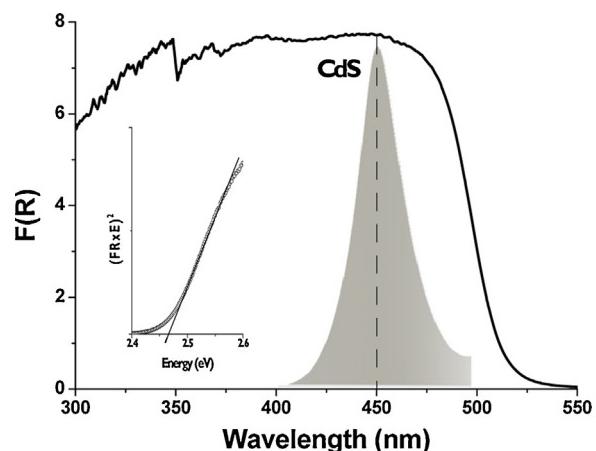
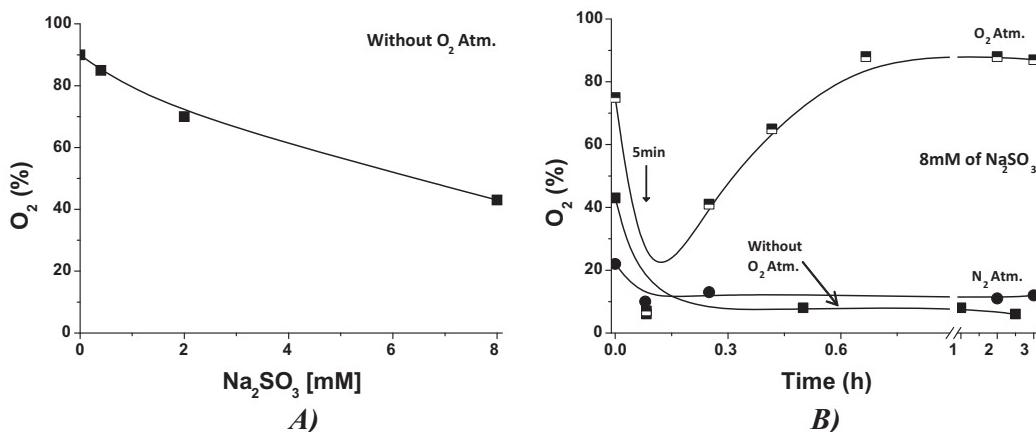


Fig. 2. UV-vis diffuse reflectance spectra for the CdS with K–M plot inside.



**Fig. 3.**  $O_2$  profile concentration in the suspensions: (A) as a function of  $Na_2SO_3$  concentrations in absence of bubbled air and (B) as a function of reaction time with 8 mM of  $Na_2SO_3$  in either aerobic or anaerobic conditions.

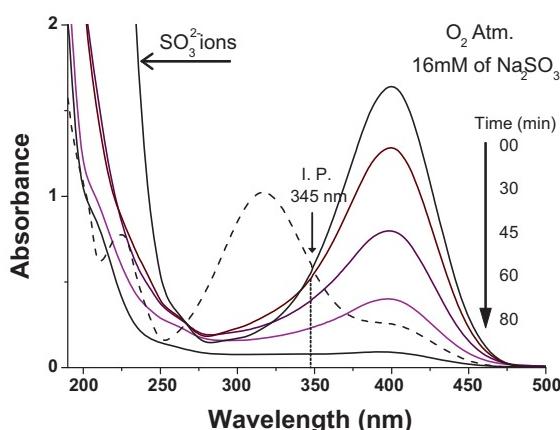
process), at a fixed concentration of  $Na_2SO_3$  (8 mM) in anaerobic conditions, without  $O_2$  atmosphere or with  $N_2$  atmosphere (Fig. 3B). The partial oxidation of the sulfite ions induced an anaerobic condition while the suspension was irradiated, due to the low concentration of  $O_2$  (10%) [21]. In contrast, an aerobic condition was obtained after the total oxidation of the sulfite ions, since the  $O_2$  concentration increased as the time progressed until reaching high concentrations at 45 min. The  $O_2$  atmosphere was achieved (Fig. 3B), since the concentration of dissolved oxygen remained constant during the time of the photocatalytic reaction. The reduction of  $O_2$  may produce  $HO_2$  and  $H_2O_2$  (or  $OH^-$ ), whereas the aerobic oxidation of sulfite may produce  $SO_3^{2-}$ ,  $S_2O_6^{2-}$ ,  $SO_5^{2-}$  and  $SO_4^{2-}$  ions. According to the literature, the sulfite oxidation proceeds by a free radical chain reaction, which may be initiated by any process that effects either the univalent oxidation of sulfite or the univalent reduction of oxygen with the concomitant formation of sulfate ( $SO_4^{2-}$ ) [22].

### 3.3. UV-vis absorbance for the 4-NP degradation or reduction reaction

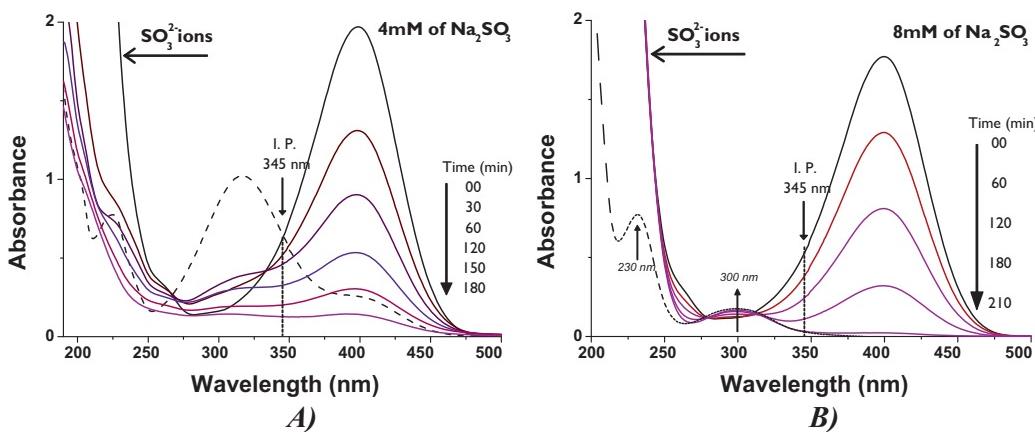
The evaluation of the CdS photocatalyst in the photocatalytic reactions shows that the 4-NP photooxidation or the 4-NPhenolate photoreduction reactions can be carried out depending on the  $Na_2SO_3$  concentrations in both anaerobic conditions. In the absence of this reactant or in the presence of an aerobic condition, the degradation process is favored. Fig. 4 shows the UV-vis absorbance

spectra for the 4-NP degradation reaction in the presence of 16 mM of  $Na_2SO_3$  under  $O_2$  atmosphere and UV light irradiation. In this case, when the 4-NP solution (15 ppm) contained 16 mM of  $Na_2SO_3$  two absorption bands at 210 nm and 400 nm could be seen. These bands correspond to the sulfite ions ( $SO_3^{2-}$ ) and to the 4-NPhenolate ion formation, respectively, due to the alkaline conditions generated by the presence of sulfite ions [17]. During the photocatalytic reaction, the absorption band of the  $SO_3^{2-}$  ions decreases as the time progresses, suggesting that it is being oxidized to sulfate. The consumption of sulfite ions may cause the modification of the pH to lower values of the irradiated solution and as a consequence it may cause the appearance of the absorption band at 315 nm (dash line in Fig. 4), associated to the 4-NP formation [11,17], thus establishing an equilibrium between the 4-NP and 4-NPhenolate species. However, the disappearance of the absorption band at 345 nm (isosbestic point, I.P.) as the time progressed, indicates that both species were eliminated through a degradation process. In addition, the residual absorption band at 190–210 nm is associated to the formation of carboxylic acids. In contrast, the addition of barium chloride ( $BaCl_2$ ) to the irradiated final solution, adjusted with HCl (acidic media), led to the formation of insoluble barium sulfate ( $BaSO_4$ ). This indicates that the sulfate ions ( $SO_4^{2-}$ ) were formed by the oxidation of the sulfite ions in aerobic condition during the photocatalytic reaction, as was suggested in Section 3.2.

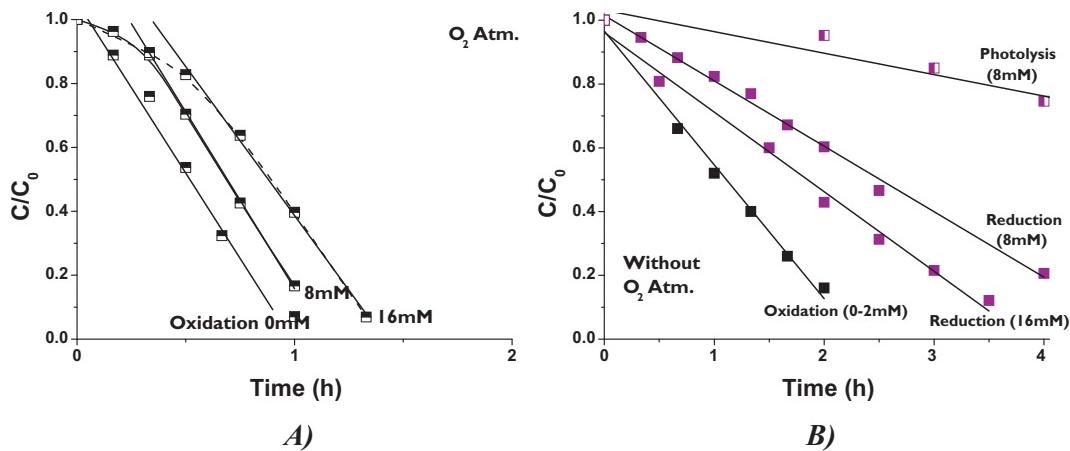
Similar behavior was obtained when the 4-NP solution contained 4 mM of  $Na_2SO_3$  in anaerobic conditions (Fig. 5A). Both absorption bands associated to the  $SO_3^{2-}$  ions (at 220 nm) and 4-NP species (at 345 nm), respectively, decreased as time progressed, therefore indicating that both species were eliminated through an oxidation process. Although  $O_2$  concentration is very low (Fig. 3B), the degradation process of both species may be achieved through other mechanisms, for example, by the  $OH^\bullet$  radical formation. In contrast, when 8 mM of  $Na_2SO_3$  was used for the photocatalytic reaction (Fig. 5B), the absorption band of the  $SO_3^{2-}$  ions was unaltered with reaction time. The absorption band of the 4-NPhenolate decreased as the time progressed, while a new absorption band appeared at 300 nm, indicating the 4-Aminophenol (4-AP) formation [11]. Additionally, the presence of the absorption band at 230 nm (associated to the aromatic ring of the 4-AP) after the elimination of  $SO_3^{2-}$  ions in the final irradiated solution (dash line), confirms that the 4-NP was photoreduced to 4-AP during the UV light irradiation with CdS and in the presence of sulfite ions in anaerobic condition, as previously reported [17]. Similar behavior (degradation process at 4 mM and reduction process at 8 mM of  $Na_2SO_3$ ) was obtained when  $N_2$  atmosphere (anaerobic condition) was used, since the sulfite concentration was also maintained during all the photocatalytic



**Fig. 4.** UV-vis absorbance spectra for the degradation of 4-NP with 16 mM of  $Na_2SO_3$  in aerobic conditions using 0.05 g/L of CdS photocatalyst under UV light irradiation.



**Fig. 5.** UV-vis absorbance spectra for 4-NP degradation and 4-NP reduction in the presence of: (A) 4 mM and (B) 8 mM of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub>, respectively, in anaerobic conditions (without O<sub>2</sub> atmosphere) under UV light irradiation.



**Fig. 6.** Kinetic curve for the photocatalytic reaction at different Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentrations in: (A) aerobic and (B) anaerobic conditions, under UV light irradiation.

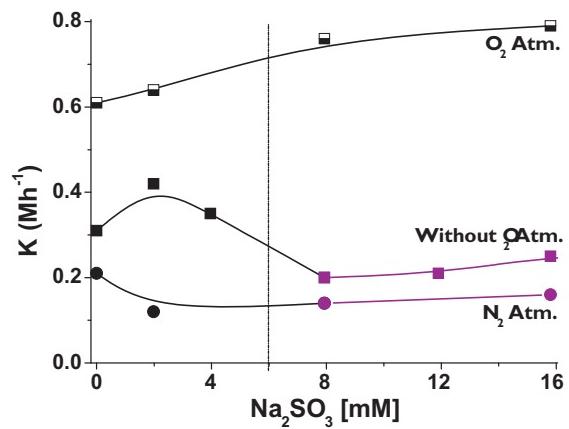
reaction. This result suggests that the oxidation reactions of both species (sulfite and 4-NPhenolate) were inhibited.

#### 3.4. Effect of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> contents in the 4-NP reaction

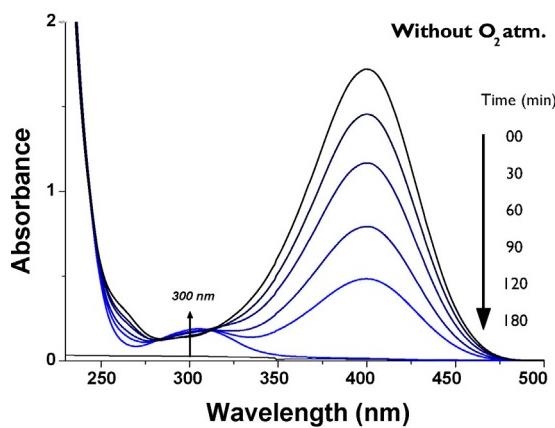
The effect of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentration on the 4-NP degradation or reduction kinetics is shown in Fig. 6A and B for the 4-NPhenolate reaction (15 ppm) at different Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentrations in either aerobic or anaerobic conditions (without O<sub>2</sub> atm.), under UV light irradiation, respectively. The kinetic curve for either the photo-oxidation or photo-reduction reaction was adjusted to zero order, where the disappearance rate of the reactant is maintained with time. This suggests that the reaction rate is independent of the 4-NPhenolate or 4-NP concentration at different sulfite concentrations. However, the kinetic curve for the 4-NP degradation with 8–16 mM of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> in aerobic condition (Fig. 6A) was retarded by an induction period. This is due to the oxidation of all sulfite ions during the first ~45 min (Fig. 3B). After the sulfite consumption and the resulting formation of the sulfate (30 min), the degradation process was carried out and the degradation rate was adjusted to zero order once again. Similar kinetic curve adjusted to zero order was obtained for either photooxidation or photoreduction reaction in N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere.

Fig. 7 shows the apparent zero order rate constant for the 4-NP degradation or reduction reaction as a function of sulfite concentration under different atmosphere conditions. When aerobic conditions were used the degradation reaction was predominant

at different ranges of sulfite concentration, with a slight increase of the rate constant value at 8–16 mM sulfite. Conversely, when the photocatalytic reaction was conducted in both anaerobic conditions (without O<sub>2</sub> or with N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere) a different behavior was obtained, which was strongly influenced by the sulfite concentration. At Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentrations of less than 4 mM the degradation process was achieved, but when the Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentrations were higher than 4 mM, both oxidation and reduction reactions



**Fig. 7.** Profile of the apparent zero order rate constant value as a function of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> concentration at different atmosphere conditions, under UV light irradiation.



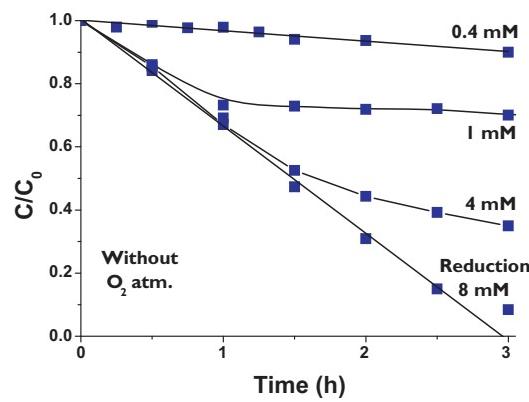
**Fig. 8.** UV-vis absorbance spectra for 4-NP reduction in presence of  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  at 8 mM in anaerobic conditions, using 0.05 g/L of CdS under blue light irradiation.

compete with each other. The reduction reaction is then favored when the  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  concentration was 8 mM, after which there is a slight increase up to 16 mM.

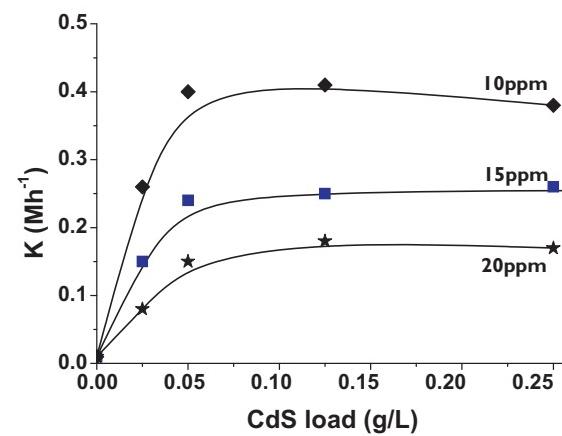
### 3.5. Reduction of 4-NP under visible light

Considering that the CdS is active under blue light, the photocatalytic 4-NPhenolate reduction reaction was carried out under this visible light irradiation. Fig. 8 shows the UV-vis absorbance spectra for the 4-NPhenolate reduction reaction in the presence of 8 mM  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  in anaerobic conditions under blue light irradiation. The decreasing of the 4-NPhenolate absorption band as the time progressed, together with the appearance of the adsorption band at 300 nm associated to the 4-AP formation indicates that the 4-NP was reduced under blue light irradiation with CdS in the presence of sulfite ions.

Fig. 9A shows the kinetic curve for the 4-NP reduction reaction at different sulfite concentrations. The reduction rate was adjusted to zero order as was obtained under UV light irradiation (Fig. 6B); however, for  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  concentrations between 1 and 4 mM the reduction reaction rate was similar to the 8 mM in the first hour. After that, the 4-NPhenolate reduction was not achieved, due to the decreasing of  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  concentrations. This behavior suggests that the conversion of 4-NP to 4-AP is low. Fig. 9B shows the apparent zero order rate constant for the 4-NP reduction as function of  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  concentrations under different atmosphere conditions



**A)**



**B)**

**Fig. 9.** (A) Kinetic curve of the 4-NP reduction and (B) the apparent zero order rate constant for the 4-NP reduction as function of the  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  concentrations in anaerobic conditions under blue light irradiation.

**Fig. 10.** Profile of the apparent rate constant value for the 4-NP reduction of solutions with different 4-NP concentrations as function of CdS load under blue light irradiation.

and under blue light irradiation. The reduction reaction rates were similar when the  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  concentrations ranged from 4 to 16 mM. The same behavior was obtained when the reduction reaction was carried out in  $\text{N}_2$  atmosphere. Conversely, the 4-NP reduction was negligible under  $\text{O}_2$  atmosphere (Fig. 9B).

### 3.6. Effect of CdS load on the 4-NP reduction

Fig. 10 shows the profile of the apparent rate constant for the reduction of 4-NPhenolate as function of photocatalyst load at different initial 4-NP concentrations. The apparent zero order rate constant for the 4-NPhenolate reduction increases with CdS load at low contents (<0.05 g/L), but when the photocatalyst load exceeds 0.05 g/L, the apparent rate constant value is maintained. This suggests that the reaction follow the Langmuir-Hinshelwood mechanism, where all the photoactive sites are covered by 4-NP molecules. This behavior suggests that the 4-AP desorption could be the controlling step. When the photocatalyst load is higher than 0.25 g/L, the reduction reaction rate begins to decrease probably due to several factors. One of them might be that the particles begin to aggregate themselves, thus reducing the interfacial area between the reaction solution and the photocatalyst, and as consequence reducing the number of photoactive sites on the photocatalyst surface. Furthermore, the lamp luminous fluxes are low and cannot illuminate all the particle surface, then the turbid effect in the

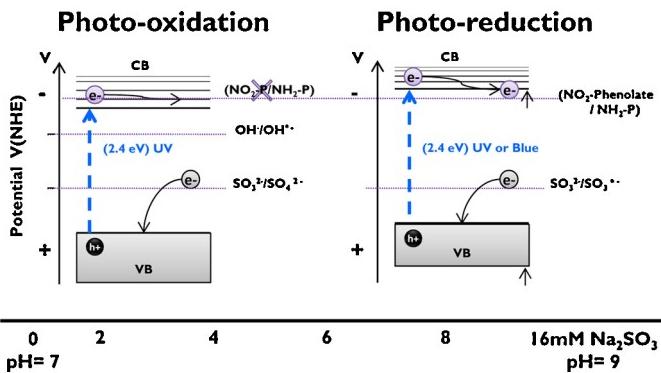


Fig. 11. Potential diagram for the photooxidation of 4-NP or photoreduction of the 4-NPhenolate in presence of  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  contents, using CdS as photocatalyst under UV or visible light irradiation.

solution reduces the generation of photoactive sites and as consequence the photocatalytic activity decreases. The photoreduction reaction without photocatalyst was negligible, suggesting that the reaction proceeded via photocatalytic reaction.

In addition, when the initial 4-NP concentration is low (10 ppm) the number of available photoactive sites is high and is possible to achieve a fast rate constant. In contrast, when the 4-NP concentration increases, these available photoactive sites decrease due to the increase of both 4-NP and 4-AP molecules adsorbed on the CdS particle surface. Considering that the lamp luminous fluxes do not varied with time, the numbers of electrons generated remain constant. Therefore, the amount of 4-NP adsorbed onto CdS particles surface is limited by the initial high concentration of 4-AP adsorbed, thus causing an inhibition process and the decrease of the total yield. This effect has been extensively reported for the degradation process using  $\text{TiO}_2$  as photocatalysts [23–25].

### 3.7. Mechanism of the 4-NP oxidation or reduction

According to the results, we propose that the 4-NP or 4-NPhenolate can be eliminated by either oxidation to organic acids or reduction to 4-AP, respectively, by different reaction mechanism, depending on the  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  content, atmosphere conditions and light irradiation (Fig. 11). When the  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  content in the 4-NP solution is higher than 8 mM in anaerobic conditions, the position of the conduction band of CdS ( $E_{CB} = -0.6 \text{ V}$  [27]) may be favorably negative as has been inferred by several authors ( $-0.8$  to  $-1.0 \text{ V}$  at pH = 9) [28,29] and considering that the redox potential for the couples 4-NPhenolate/4-AP is  $-0.7 \text{ V}$  [26], during the photocatalytic reaction under UV or blue light the photogenerated holes ( $h^+$ ) react with the  $\text{SO}_3^{2-}$  ions to form sulfite radicals ( $\text{SO}_3^{\bullet-}$ ), while the photogenerated electrons ( $e^-$ ) are transferred from the conduction band of CdS to the acceptor reactant molecule (4-NPhenolate) [17], favoring the reduction process. In contrast, concentrations of  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  of less than 4 mM allow all the sulfite oxidation to the sulfate formation and as consequence the ( $E_{CB}$ ) of CdS appears to be unaltered and the electron transfer is not appropriated for the 4-NPhenolate reduction. However, when UV light irradiation is used, the degradation process is detected and it can be done by the presence of hydroxyl radical ( $\text{OH}^\bullet$ ), which are generated by the photolysis of water under UV light irradiation [5]. These hydroxyl radicals present an adequate oxidation potential, which are considered as strong oxidant agents capable of oxidizing organic compounds like 4-NP to organic acids [30].

On the other hand, when the photocatalytic reaction is carried out in aerobic conditions under UV light, the high  $\text{O}_2$  concentration induces the fast sulfite oxidation to the formation of the sulfate [21]. Such decrease of the sulfite concentration is accompanied with

the generation of  $\text{OH}^\bullet$  radicals which are responsible for the 4-NP degradation. But, when the blue light irradiation is used the sulfite ions are consumed, probably by the photogenerated holes and the CdS photocatalyst is photocorroded. Consequently, the 4-NP degradation is not carried out, since the blue energy is not sufficiently powerful to induce the photolysis of water. Therefore, the oxidation or reduction reaction is achieved in the presence of the appropriate sulfite concentration in anaerobic condition under appropriate UV or visible light irradiation.

## 4. Conclusions

The degradation of 4-NP was achieved at different sulfite concentrations in aerobic conditions under UV light irradiation. However, the 4-NP degradation or reduction reaction was carried out depending of the  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  concentration in anaerobic conditions. At  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  concentrations of less than 4 mM, the  $\text{OH}^\bullet$  radical formation induce the oxidation of the both sulfite and 4-NP. Furthermore, at  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_3$  concentrations higher than 8 mM, the 4-NP reduction is favored via an electron transfer process from the photocatalyst surface to the 4-NPhenolate species. Under blue light irradiation only the reduction reaction was obtained in anaerobic conditions. The 4-NP degradation and reduction reactions follow a kinetic of zero order and they can be used for the evaluation of active photocatalysts under UV or visible light.

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